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SUBJECT: (U) Secretary Clinton's March 23, 2009
conversation with Greek-Orthodox Archbishop Demetrios

Classified by: EUR Acting Assistant Secretary Marcie
Ries - Reason 1.4(d)

11. (U) Participants:

Department of State
Secretary Clinton
U.S. Ambassador to Greece Daniel Speckhard
EUR DAS Matthew Bryza
Special Assistant Andrew Shapiro
Greece Desk Officer Ilan Goodman (Notetaker)

Greek Orthodox Church
Greek Orthodox Archbishop Demetrios
Father Alex Karloutsos
Andrew Manatos
John Castimitidis

12. (C) SUMMARY: During a 30-minute meeting with Secretary Clinton March 23, Archbishop Demetrios thanked the Secretary for her public statements in Ankara March 6 in support of the Ecumenical Patriarch and the reopening of the Halki Seminary. Demetrios urged the Secretary to advocate for President Obama to meet with the Ecumenical Patriarch on his upcoming visit to Istanbul. The Archbishop raised press reports that Turkish Cypriot leader Talat was coming to Washington to meet with Secretary Clinton and pressed the Secretary to meet with a high-level Cypriot official prior to any meeting with Talat. He also argued for pressure on Macedonia to agree to a composite name. END SUMMARY

13. (C) Archbishop Demetrios congratulated the Secretary on her new position, hoping that she would help bring order to a "chaotic world" and offering his support for the tremendous challenges facing her. He noted that as First Lady, as a Senator from New York and as Secretary of State, Clinton had been involved in the complicated and vexing issues he wished to discuss. He stated that he was not present as an advocate on "Greek issues" or "Orthodox Issues" but on behalf of patriotic Greek-Americans who advocated for a universal respect for human rights and religious freedoms that has been part of Greek ideals for 6000 years. Secretary Clinton thanked the Archbishop, noting she had been present at his inauguration. She acknowledged the difficult tasks ahead, but that with the support and prayers of friends

and people she admired, she was sure that we could achieve a more peaceful, prosperous and progressive America. Now is the time to resolve longstanding conflicts and problems she concluded.

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE

14. (C) The Archbishop raised concerns regarding the Government of Turkey's refusal to allow the Halki Seminary to re-open and its approach to the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The Patriarchate remains an important center and official church for over 300 million people worldwide and is part of the American identity as well. The Archbishop thanked Secretary Clinton for her public statements in Ankara supporting Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and the re-opening of the Halki Seminary. He regretted that on the latter issue there had been no progress with the Government of Turkey. Religious freedom is a key part of Turkey's EU accession process and a test of Turkey's willingness to reform. The Archbishop urged the Secretary to use her influence to encourage President Obama to visit the Patriarchate during his upcoming trip to Turkey. This would be especially symbolic since the President's trip was not related to NATO or military issues but about culture and civilization--things the Patriarch represented.

15. (C) Secretary Clinton recalled her first visit to the Patriarch in 1999 with President Clinton and her two "long, thoughtful conversations" with him since then. The Secretary said that during all of her visits to Turkey, she has raised the issue of the status of the Patriarchate and would advocate a similar approach by President Obama during his visit. She took on board the suggestion for him to visit the Patriarchate if possible.

HALKI SEMINARY

16. (C) The Secretary called the current stalemate on reopening the Halki Seminary "unfortunate." The Turkish leadership told her during her recent trip that the government wanted to reopen the Halki seminary, but needed reciprocal actions from Greece on allowing language education for the Turkish community in Thrace. She noted she had raised the issue with FM Bakoyannis (in their February 25 meeting). Bakoyannis argued that the issues should not be linked, and that Turkey should take action because it was the right thing to do. Nonetheless, the Secretary said this was the first time she had heard the statement of intent from a Turkish official to reopen Halki, albeit with a request for reciprocal Greek action. While she was not sure which action could be taken by Greece, the Secretary wanted to shift the burden back onto Turkey. Archbishop Demetrios said that the issue should not be one solely between Turkey and Greece, but between Turkey and the United States.

17. (C) Andrew Manatos, a lay Church leader who participated in the meeting, mentioned that Illinois Senator Durbin wanted to be helpful as well following his trip to the region. Manatos said the Greeks had provided the Senator a list of actions they had taken to assist the Turkish community in Thrace. He said the Turkish government should produce a similar list of its actions it has taken to support the Patriarchate--and if they are equivalent, this could provide the Turkish Government the appropriate cover it feels it needs to re-open the seminary. DAS Bryza added he had spoken with Greek FM Bakoyannis, and then with Turkish MFA U/S Apakan, urging Turkey to take this list, declare victory and move forward with reopening Halki. Bryza pledged to push again.

18. (C) Secretary Clinton undertook to continue to advocate on the Halki Seminary issue, which is important to the U.S. Also important is continued Greek support for Turkey's EU accession process. Turkey had made earlier progress in its EU accession process but progress has stalled. The USG is therefore paying extra attention to Turkey right now in order to keep Turkey from drifting away from its western, NATO orientation. A decade ago the U.S. was very popular in Turkey but no longer. In re-building our relationship with Turkey, the U.S. is not aiming to undermine our ties with Greece but must work hard to regain leverage with Turkey at a time when we are starting anew from a deficit of support.

CYPRUS

19. (C) The Archbishop raised Cyprus issues, of importance to the many Cypriot-Americans in his community. The division of Cyprus has gone on for too long and the Cypriots are willing to live together peacefully as they used to. He said that he had heard rumors that Turkish Cypriot leader Talat was visiting Washington and would meet with Secretary Clinton. This had caused a great deal of concern in the community and though he had told them not to listen to rumors, he was compelled to ask if the first Administration contact with someone from the island would not be with someone from the Republic of Cyprus.

110. (C) Secretary Clinton thanked the Archbishop for bringing the matter to her attention, but that such a meeting could not be scheduled right now, given her upcoming travels and other demands on her time during this period. She would also want to follow proper protocol. DAS Bryza noted that there was currently a proposal to speak with Kyprianou, followed by Talat. Secretary Clinton asked if it was possible to meet with Kyprianou on her upcoming visit to Europe. The Archbishop and his retinue agreed this plan of action would best. They reiterated they had no problem with her meeting Talat if she felt it would help achieve a settlement, but that she should meet with the recognized Government of Cyprus, first.

MACEDONIA NAME ISSUE

111. (C) The Archbishop stated that U.S. recognition of Macedonia by its constitutional name in 2004, had come as a shock and surprise to his community. Despite a commitment from President Bush that the United States would abide by any mutually agreed upon name and the argument that Macedonia was facing a crisis that could lead to its dissolution, it appeared to be slap in the face of NATO Ally Greece. The Archbishop noted that Greece had made a huge investment into Macedonia and lamented that the issue had not been solved in the 1990's when a solution was easy. Now like a virus left untreated it is much worse. He said that Macedonia needs to accept a modifier, to make it clear it was not "absolute." "New" would be best, since it would retain a connection to the original while not raising absolute claims, and there is precedent for it in the civilized countries (Australia, USA). (Note: We do not believe Demetrious was offering a modifier in coordination with the government of Greece, which is working on a different modifier in negotiations with the Macedonians under the auspices of UN envoy Matthew Nimetz.) Demetrios urged U.S. pressure on Skopje to accept a composite name. Under his perception, the Macedonians had been "treated very favorably," and now it was time for the U.S. to do more.

¶12. (C) Ambassador Speckhard interjected that despite enormous effort to find a solution, the negotiations are stuck. Macedonia's recent elections should help clear the political air. He added that he had spoken with Greek FM Bakoyannis about the issue, who had taken a very brave stance in pushing for a composite name. Speckhard will will see UN mediator Ambassador Matthew Nimetz soon to discuss the issue.

¶13. (C) Andrew Manatos advised Secretary Clinton to follow her instincts about Turkey, which needs to be spoken to bluntly and realistically. The Turks respond to being spoken to frankly, like a friend and equal as the Clinton Administration had done in the past, and efforts to hide or sweep under the rug significant issues or differences would be counterproductive.
CLINTON